“Unto Us a Child is Born: Light for Those Living in Darkness”

Isaiah 9:1-7; Matthew 4:13-17

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 12/6/20)

 Both Hosea and Isaiah spoke at a time when people, created for God’s glory, chose to live with a sense of gloom. Even then man had a tendency to ignore his Creator and live outside of His best. The results were predictably gloomy. Gloom comes from alienation from God. (Q1) Some people even come to accept that this is just the way life is always going to be. In 2020, we also live in a time of mental, relational, political, and moral darkness. The message of Christmas is NOT to drum up enough Christmas cheer to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. No, it is this: God remains loyal to His own; God brings us a great Light. God’s people are a people of this Light. They are a people of glory, not gloom.

 Isaiah gave his message to a people who honored God with their mouths, but dishonored Him with their lives. Isaiah prophesied that because of this, judgment would be coming to Judah. The “gloom and distress” of 9:1 describes the times they were living in. But there’s a difference between living “in” something and living “by” something. Yes, the darkness around us is real, but we are to live “by” God’s promises. (Q2)

 Now read Matt. 4:13-17. The Light comes in the person of Jesus. His message was and is: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” (Q3) Our ultimate joy, peace, and salvation is in Jesus. What’s more, God has promised that our Savior will come again and receive us unto Himself. We are meant to live our days enjoying the blessings of His Kingdom. We are meant to live our days with the purpose of pointing others to Him.

 9:3-5 is in the “prophetic perfect tense.” It speaks of future events, but speaks to God’s people as if these events had already happened. These verses describe bumper crops and victorious soldiers with arms full of treasure. It is a picture of joy! It is a message that says that darkness will overwhelm you without God, but with God, victory is assured. Yes, we live as aliens in a dark land, but will you live in this surrounding gloom with hope and joy in Christ? (Q4)

 9:6 tells us that a Child is born, a Son is given. This human/Divine child will one day have the government upon His shoulder: Jesus will rule the entire earth! I guess it boils down to this question: is the government of my life and my eternal future resting on the shoulder of Jesus, or am I self-directed, carrying my burdens myself? The Gospel has to do with the throne room of your heart. **Who is on the throne, you or Jesus?** (Q5) Either Jesus bears God’s wrath for us, or we will bear God’s wrath in Hell.

 You know what? Your best days are ahead of you, if you’re in Christ. Jesus is the means to our rescue; He is the gateway to forgiveness. He has the power to welcome and the power to reject (see Isa. 22:22 and Rev. 3:7). Notice the word “given” in 9:6. To enjoy a gift, you simply receive it. It’s not earned. You cannot achieve it yourself. You are not worthy of salvation; IT IS A GIFT! Ask yourself, do you live as one upon whom the light of Christ has shined? You have been liberated from the penalty of sin. Now live for the day when you will be forever in His presence. Keep your gaze fixed on Him (Heb. 12:1-2) and follow Him with all of your heart. (Q6)

**QUESTIONS:**

1. How does one become alienated from God?
2. Name as many of His promises as you can!
3. Read Matt. 4:17 again. Why did Jesus say the Kingdom of Heaven is “**at hand**”?
4. Describe the conduct of a Christian living **in** this dark world, but **by** and **for** Christ.
5. Stop and read this again. Consider it. Act on it.
6. All of the great things in 9:7 will be accomplished by “the zeal of the Lord,” not politics, not science, not you, and not me. How is this comforting to you?

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” (Charles Wesley)

1 Hark! the herald angels sing,

"Glory to the newborn King:

peace on earth, and mercy mild,

God and sinners reconciled!"

Joyful, all ye nations, rise,

join the triumph of the skies;

with th'angelic hosts proclaim,

"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain:

Hark! the herald angels sing,

"Glory to the newborn King"

2 Christ, by highest heaven adored,

Christ, the everlasting Lord,

late in time behold him come,

offspring of the Virgin's womb:

veiled in flesh the Godhead see;

hail th'incarnate Deity,

pleased with us in flesh to dwell,

Jesus, our Immanuel. [Refrain]

3 Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!

Hail the Sun of Righteousness!

Light and life to all he brings,

risen with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by,

born that we no more may die,

born to raise us from the earth,

born to give us second birth. [Refrain]